ATARI DEVELOPMENT PARTNER NEWSLETTER

February 1990

This Newsletter is brief because we have been busy making things work. As our internal operations get smoother, we will have more to report and more time to report it.

One of the greatest frustrations for developers is not being able to reach J. Patton for technical help. We've tracked down the problem and it should be fixed by the time you read this. It seems there were two phone lines going to J.'s desk, but only one phone. When J. was talking to one developer, the system would roll over to the other line and the caller would hear it ring. Unfortunately, J. could not hear it ring, so...

TT WAITING LIST

If you are not already on the TT waiting list and want to be, call Gail Johnson at 408-745-2568. Give her your name, address and phone number. We expect to have machines for you early in March (that's an estimation, not a promise). Only those developers on the waiting list will be eligible for advance machines. When we have more information, we will contact the people on the waiting list. Everyone else will have to wait until the TTs are in general release. ♦

STE RELEASE NOTES

If all went well, the STE Release Notes and disk are included with this Newsletter. This machine has many impressive new capabilities and we encourage you to take advantage of them. Information on the availability of machines and prices will be forthcoming in a future Newsletter. ♦

DATABASE UPDATE

We hope the customer and dealer databases we included with the January Newsletter have been useful to you. However, I realize that I could have made your life easier if I had done things a little differently. First, I should have given you the maximum field lengths so that you could set up your database manager correctly. I include them now for those of you who have not already figured them out.

News Updates

Charles Cherry

Customer Database:

First name	13
Middle initial	1
Last name	16
Business name	30
Address	30
City	20
State	2
ZIP	5
Sex Code	1
Customer Type	1
Date of Purchase	4

Dealer Database:

Company Name	35
Street Address	35
City	18
State	2
ZIP	10
Store Owner	25
Store Manager	25
Date Verified	8

It has also come to my attention that some of the fields have commas within them. This confuses the database manager which thinks a new field is

beginning. I suggest that before you put the files into your database manager, you load them into a text editor and search and replace all ", " (comma, space) with "— " (dash, space). That should catch most of the offenders and still leave understandable records. In future databases, I'll make sure this is done before we mail them. ♦

DEVELOPER PRICES

The price sheet in the January Newsletter has an error in the price of the Rainbow TOS ROMs. The correct price is $60.00. ♦

SORRY, MARK

In the January Newsletter, I referred to Soft Logik's desktop publishing package as Publishing Partner. The correct name is PageStream. I've used that program so long, I still call it by its old name. ♦

PLEASE NOTE

If you change the name of your development company, address, phone number or contact person, you must notify Gail Johnson IMMEDIATELY (or sooner). ♦

MEGA STE?

Atari is considering developing a Mega STE. If we do, would you prefer that it have the Mega buss or the VME buss? Please mail your comments to Charles Cherry. ♦

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

J. Patton

GEM

Q: I would like to prepare my application to use the Moniterm (and any other non–Atari) monitor. Are there any hints to making my program compatible?

A: For the Moniterm monitors (and others with correctly written drivers), you can write your code in a resolution independent fashion. This means paying attention to the resolution and number of planes returned from opening the workstation or the VDI inquire calls. GEM applications should use this method instead of using the Getrez() call to determine which monitor you are using. LINE-A variables will also return correct information.

VDI

Q: Do I have to delete an old metafile name after I have renamed it?

A: Yes, vm_filename does not delete the old filename. Additional notes about metafiles:

1. You must open a virtual workstation before the physical workstation for the metafile.

2. If you set the filename in the intout array before opening the physical workstation, that metafile will be opened automatically.

```
char *filename;

filename = "sample.gem";
intout [0] = 12345;
intout [1] = (unsigned)((long)filename
    >> 16);
intout [2] = (unsigned)((long)filename
    & 0xffff);
```

Q: I've got the latest documentation on the bit image file format, but I still seem to be having trouble. Can you help?

A: There are three points which should be clarified.

1. The vertical replication count component of the scanline is optional, don't assume it will be there.

2. Plane data can be encoded in one OR MORE of the three modes: solid run, pattern run, or bit string. So you can have a mixture of the three modes, not just an exclusive pattern.

3. Pattern run item definition of the last byte–n, is defined by header word 3 when word 3 is greater than 1.

GEMDOS

Q: I'm writing a database program which uses data files that I need to ensure won't get lost if a catastrophe occurs. So I want to be able to clear all the file buffers with the least amount of overhead to my program.

A: As you may know, TOS 1.4 uses its buffer list more efficiently than TOS 1.2 and TOS 1.0, and it may be some time before the buffers are written to disk. There is a provision to flush dirty buffers to disk: close any file. When any file is closed, all dirty buffers are written to disk. That includes all buffers for all files open on all drives. With an adequate disk cache there will be no disk accesses.

NEW ONLINE

XCONTROL.TXT Preliminary specifications for the extensible control panel for Atari computers. ♦

BITS AND BYTES

These listings are for your information and evaluation. They are not necessarily endorsed by Atari Corporation.

PAINT AND SOUND

Tommy Software is looking for U.S. distributors for MegaPaint II, a pixel and vector graphics package; Sound-Machine II, an STE sequencer; and SoundMerlin, a professional sound sampler. Contact gez. Maier at Tommy Software, Selchower Str. 32, D-1000, Berlin 44, West Germany. ♦

MULTITASKING

David Beckmeyer took to heart my request to get multitasking information out to developers. Instead of writing an article for the Newsletter to describe what he is doing, he has put Beckmeyer Development Tools' Micro RTX system into shareware distribution. It is now available on GEnie, CompuServe, and all the usual places. I encourage everyone to get a copy and check it out. Please, send your comments, in writing, to Charles Cherry. This is not an endorsement, it's a request that you evaluate one developer's product and see how it works for you. ♦

CAD/CAM

Godrej is looking for distribution of their CAD/CAM applications. Contact Manu Parpia at Godrej Bhavan, 4A Home Street, Bombay-400 001, India. ♦

HELP SYSTEM

Nebojsa Zivkovic is seeking a distributor for his Help system desk accessory. This could be sold as an independant product or incorporated as the on-line help system on other products. Contact Nebojsa Zivkovic at 11000 Belgrade, Rimska 9/2, Yugoslavia. ♦

MARKETING NOTES

Shanna Dewey

By now most of you have received the customer/dealer list and are probably wondering what to do with it. Use it! The list gives you thousands of leads and potential customers which can be an invaluable tool if you use it to your advantage.

Almost every business needs company literature to attract new customers and to maintain and/or establish an image. Company literature consists of a letterhead, stationery with envelopes, business cards and brochures. A well designed brochure can be one of the most effective marketing tools available. Brochures can be handed out, mass mailed, or enclosed in personal letters. Some are kept for long periods and are used as reference material and others are passed from one individual to another. All of your brochures remind your customers that you are out there and available.

As a form of advertising, brochures can be expensive, but this is the one area where you should not tighten the purse strings. A good brochure can be worth its weight in gold, to borrow a phrase, in bringing in new business. A bad brochure, on the other hand, will not bring in new business and may even discourage existing business by conveying an unprofessional image.

BROCHURE DEVELOPMENT

There are several elements to a good brochure: text, graphics, color and layout. All are equally important as they combine to catch the attention of the readers and influence their decision to telephone or write for more information, fill out and mail an application, or purchase a product or service.

Take a look at some brochures. What is it about them that attracts you? Is it the text content that interests you? the graphics? the color? What about the layout? Does it make you want to continue reading the entire brochure? Try to determine what it is that makes you feel this way. There are as many different reasons why people are attracted to a specific brochure as there are people who read them. Your job is to design a brochure that attracts as many people as possible.

TEXT

The text should be written in a way that excites and promotes the reader into taking some action. Make it easy on your customers by providing your company name, address and phone number – an 800 phone number is still one of the best marketing tools for the money. Place this information in a prominent place in your brochure. Most people look at the front and back page for this information. Emphasize the benefits of your product, not the features. Knowing what it does does not excite the consumer nearly as much as knowing how it will improve their life. Use appropriate text fonts and action words like *power*, *easy* and *assist*. Be creative and positive, but don't overdo it. Most people don't like a hard sell, even in a brochure.

GRAPHICS

Graphics include anything like logos, photographs, geometric shapes in the background or paint splashed across the page. Graphics should enhance your brochure, but not overpower it. If the purpose of your brochure is to promote your photography studio, a series of photographs with very little text may be appropriate. But to promote a software package, graphics should be used to enhance the text or for demonstration purposes.

If you use photography, make sure it is professional. Hiring a professional photographer can be expensive, but if you shop around you may find one that will do a package for you at a reasonable price. If you are incorporating a landmark or other "common" photograph, contact your local library or historical society. For a nominal rental fee, they may have just what you're looking for.

A logo is very important for the image of your product. Take a look at some well known logos: The Atari Fuji looks like a highly stylized A, reminding the viewer of Atari. "Atari" is the word spoken when you are about to win or capture your opponent in "Go," a Japanese game akin to checkers and chess. "Atari" may be the attitude the founder, Nolan Bushnell, had toward the computer market at that time. An apple is pure and wholesome, giving Apple Computers an approachable image with products the whole family can use. The rainbow colors in the apple itself symbolize the diversity of the company's products. Playskool Toys' logo is of heavy, slightly scrawled letters, as though they were written by a child. The overall image of each company is contained in all three of these logos. Your logo should also reflect your company's image.

If you already have a logo, use it in all of your literature. If you don't have one, you should. A professional logo need not be expensive. You can hire a contract graphic artist or go with a professional advertising firm. In either case, make sure you tell the artist about what business you are in and the image you want to convey. The more he knows about what you are producing, the easier it will be for him to create a good logo that speaks for itself about your product and company.

COLOR

Color is a key ingredient in a good brochure. Again look at some brochures and notice how color reflects the image of the company. The brochures for American Express Card are mostly green, white and darker colors. This helps to promote an image of professionalism and longevity. Using flashy, neon colors will be very exciting and may be appropriate for ski equipment and some computer games, but may not be appropriate for an inventory control package.

LAYOUT

Layout refers to the placement of the text and graphics on a page, as well as how your brochure is folded. Make sure your brochure flows in a concise and easy-to-follow manner. If the brochure doesn't flow smoothly, it will look awkward and most people won't read it.

Generally, most people remember the first and last thing they see, hear and read regarding a particular subject. The same is true in a brochure, but is taken one step further. Usually, the first line and the last line of a brochure are read first. The rest of the brochure is read only if those lines generate enough interest. There is also a tendency for people to look over a page in a backward S pattern, starting in the upper left corner. You may want to place any significant text or graphics in these areas to attract the reader's attention.

The first line, and page, should be used to entice the reader into reading the entire brochure. Usually, there is a phrase or photograph that attracts attention and piques the reader's curiosity. A common advertising phrase is, "We're selling the sizzle, not the steak." This first line is the sizzle that makes the reader excited about seeing the steak.

How your brochure is folded will also add to its overall tone. Some brochures are several pages long and may be contained in a folder. Others are a single sheet which may be folded in a variety of ways, most commonly in thirds.

A popular fold is the "Z" fold. The brochure is folded in thirds, similar to a letter, except the top of the first page is on the outside, not tucked inside. The main advantage to this fold is that it fits into an envelope and falls open when you remove it. If you use a longer sheet of paper, this would be an accordion fold because you would need to add several more folds to make the brochure fit into the same envelope. However you decide to fold your brochure, make sure the content flows logically and smoothly.

Most important, keep your overall image in mind. Your entire brochure must promote that image. The image may change from product to product, but if you have a professional company, make sure you produce a professional brochure. Even if your product is children's toys, about the least "professional" product on the market, your advertising and brochures can and must reflect a professional company.

INTERNATIONAL

If you plan on shipping your product and brochures overseas, make sure you know the U.S. customs regulations regarding exportation. For example, all printed material must have "Printed in USA" on it. Before you ship anything overseas, contact your local post office and they can give you all the customs information you need.

You also need to be aware of local customs in the country where your product is going. There are many differences with regard to language translations, color differences and sacred days, times or words. For example, the Chevy Nova did not sell well in Spanish- or French-speaking countries because "nova" means "no go" in those languages. There is an Austrian candy bar called a Zit. White is the color of mourning in Asian countries; red is the color worn by brides. Sundown Friday to sundown Saturday is the Sabbath in Jewish nations and nothing is open, not even public transportation. There are countless differences you must be aware of when marketing overseas. Do a lot of research and plan your brochure accordingly.

There are many considerations in brochure design. One of the most important things to remember is that your brochure will reflect an overall image of your company; make sure it is the image you want. With a little creativity and a lot of planning, your brochure can be your best advertising tool. ◆

Recommended Reading: "Marketing Warfare" by Trout and Reis. Equates the marketing process with a war with battles and skirmishes to be won. ◆